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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2006

In Today's Papers

EU Warns Ankara on Kurdish Situation

All papers: On Thursday, the European Commission and European lawmakers urged Turkey to grant Kurds more economic and cultural rights, voicing concern over violence in the mainly Kurdish southeast. EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou told the European Parliament the PKK was included in the EU terror list, but urged the Turkish government to fulfill its promises to improve the rights of Kurds. "We urge the Turkish government to address the problems in the region in a comprehensive manner, and not only from a security point of view," Kyprianou said, asking Turkey to facilitate the return of displaced Kurds to their villages and stop deploying state-sponsored militiamen (Korucu) in villages. Several lawmakers also urged Turkey to establish a political dialogue with moderate Kurds. European Parliament's Turkey Rapporteur said executives of Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP should also denounce terror, and warned Turkey not to use excessive force.

Prime Minister Erdogan, in response to a letter by several socialist members of the European Parliament in which the lawmakers warned the problems in southeast Turkey cannot be solved through only military means, said "they should first come here and see the incidents in the field." On the DTP, Erdogan said the pro-Kurdish party must accept the PKK as a terrorist organization. "If you want to have a democratic life, you don't need weapons. You can come without weapons and speak out at the table," Erdogan emphasized, prompting comments in today's papers wondering whether the PM's "ambiguous" remarks implied a call for initiation of a dialogue with the PKK.

Commenting on the US position with regard to the PKK issue, Hakan Celik writes in the mass appeal/sensationalist Posta that elimination of the PKK

problem was not among US priorities: "The Washington Administration believes that this is Turkey's problem and should be resolved directly by Turkey. Although, as an ally, the US considers relations with Turkey important, at the same time, it wants to improve relations with Kurds in northern Iraq. From the angle of its own interests, the US considers an operation against the PKK dangerous and unnecessary. For these reasons, Turkey feels that the US has left Turkey alone in its fight against the PKK."

Gul: Intelligence Talks Aim Iraq's Unity
Radikal reports Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in a comment to reporters, confirmed that meetings among Turkish and some Arab countries' intelligence services aimed at preservation of Iraq's unity and integrity had taken place, saying that such meetings "were nothing out of the ordinary." Responding to another reporter's question, Gul dismissed press reports claiming there were secret meetings between Turkish officials and Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani as "sensational."

Iraqi Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders are to meet in Jordan in an effort to prevent ethnic conflict in Iraq. Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab League will join the meetings on April 22.

Kretschmer Warns More Judicial Reforms Needed in Turkey
Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others:
The European Commission Turkey representative Ambassador Hansjorg Kretschmer told a conference in Ankara that some prosecutors in Turkey cannot grasp the soul of reforms,

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and that they do not respect freedom of expression. Kretschmer said restrictive provisions on free speech, such as Article 301 through which several journalists have been tried, still existed, and the independence of the judiciary was questioned. Kretschmer warned not only human rights, supremacy of law, and democracy, but also the economic situation would suffer without a well-functioning judicial system.

Soldiers, Policeman Killed by the PKK Laid to Rest
All papers: A funeral has been held in Ankara yesterday for five Turkish soldiers and a policeman killed in fighting with the PKK. The soldiers were killed in a clash with the PKK militants in the Gabar Mountains in the southeastern province of Sirnak, and the policeman was killed during a PKK attack at a police checkpoint in the nearby city of Bingol earlier this week. Land Forces Commander General Yasar Buyukanit vowed at the funeral the attackers would be punished. Some relatives of the slain soldiers lashed out at the government for being nonchalant.

Commentary on Globalization
Ertugrul Ozkok, the editor in-chief of Turkey's leading daily Hurriyet, praises as a "wonderful development" the National Bank of Greece's (NBG) purchase of a majority stake in Turkey's Finansbank. Ozkok deems the purchase important at a time of "serious blows" to globalization such as the US Administration's rejection of a Dubai company's bid to run some American ports and some European countries' blockade on the sale of companies to foreigners: "In the midst of such an atmosphere, a Greek bank has agreed to pay billions of dollars to a Turkish bank. This initiative is an example of bravery and a historic challenge on the part of both sides. I watch Turkey and Greece with pleasure while they are giving lessons of liberalism to the world. I always believed that countries that consider globalization to be imperialism are very much mistaken. Developing countries like Turkey and India could benefit more from globalization than the old economies. The US has just realized this fact. A new era is starting in economic

history for brave countries without any complexes, like Turkey."

TV Highlights
NTV (7 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Turkish high court Danistay has released a statement that the government must abide by judicial rulings, and dismissed as "unacceptable" charges by Prime Minister Erdogan that Danistay was blocking government implementation.
- Four people including the chairman of the Kurdish party DTP in Silopi in the southeastern city of Sirnak were arrested for joining protest demonstrations in Diyarbakir earlier last week.
- The ruling AKP government has sent to the Presidency a bill earlier vetoed by President Sezer which allows Turkey's banned Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan to serve his prison sentence at home. Erbakan was convicted of irregularities in election aid funds given by the Treasury to the Welfare Party.

International News

- Iraq remains unable to form a government of national

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unity more than four months after the elections.

- Israeli President Katsav assigned interim PM Olmert to form a new government.
- Prosecutor Carla del Ponte's office said Belgrade will hand over fugitive Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague before the end of the month.
- At least 40 suspected Taliban fighters killed in clashes with security forces in North Waziristan in Pakistan.

Economy News

- Joint Turkey and Greece banking initiative: Turkey-Greek Business Aegean Bank - BAB branch office will be opened in Athens in June.
- The Turkish government is to submit to President Sezer on Friday a cabinet decree regarding the appointment of a new chairman for Central Bank. Reports speculate the nominee is Ibrahim Canakci, Treasury Undersecretary.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON